



House of Commons Science and Technology Committee

The Cooksey Review: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2006–07

Third Special Report of Session 2006–07

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 23 July 2007*

The Science and Technology Committee

The Science and Technology Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of Science and Innovation and its associated public bodies.

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A list of Reports from the Committee in this Parliament is included at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

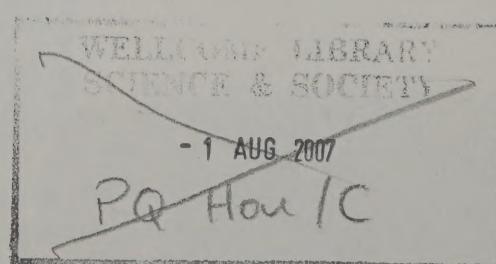
The current staff of the Committee are: Dr Lynn Gardner (Clerk); Dr Celia Blacklock (Second Clerk); Dr Chris Tyler (Committee Specialist); Ana Ferreira (Committee Assistant); Christine McGrane (Committee Secretary); and Jonathan Olivier Wright (Senior Office Clerk).

Previous Committee staff during the inquiry

Dr Anne Simpson (Committee Specialist); Dr Sarah Bunn (Committee Specialist); and Robert Long (Senior Office Clerk).

Contacts

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Third Special Report

On 15 March 2007 the Science and Technology Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2006-07, *The Cooksey Review* [HC 204]. On 13 June 2007 the Committee received a memorandum from the Government which contained a response to the Report. On 20 June 2007 the Committee wrote to the Government requesting a revised and expanded response in the customary format. This was received on 18 July 2007. Both memoranda are published as appendices to this Report

Appendix 1: Government Response of 13 June 2007

The Government welcomes the Committee's report on Sir David Cooksey's Review and the Committee's overall endorsement of his report.

1. The Cooksey Review of UK Health Research Funding recommended new institutional arrangements to bring together the health research budgets of the MRC and DH so as to achieve better coordination of health research and more coherent funding arrangements. The Government has established the Office for Strategic Coordination of Health Research (OSCHR) to implement these recommendations. OSCHR is establishing two Boards, a Translational Medicines Board and a Public Health Research Board, supported by both NIHR and MRC, which will be responsible for developing the single strategies for Government funded translational and public health research. OSCHR will also be focusing on e-health with the aim of realising the research benefit of the NHS IT system.
2. The Government agrees with the Committee that peer review should remain at the heart of funding decisions and that UK publicly funded funding bodies should consider the whole range of diseases and health research areas, including those areas highlighted by the Committee (public health research, research which would benefit the developing world and medical engineering and technology). The Cooksey Report clearly recognises the importance of basic research and the importance of maintaining the UK's excellence in this area and Government supports this view. It is also vital to get the balance right between basic, applied and translational research, and OSCHR will support transparent and evidence-based decision-making on that balance over time.
3. The Government will ensure that we take advantage of the UK's strong basic biomedical research base by swiftly and effectively translating developments in basic biomedical research into benefits for patients and the public. In addition, the Government will place a greater emphasis on applied research, to develop and implement better means for preventing, diagnosing and treating disease, and harness the potential of the NHS as a platform for applied clinical research to achieve the twin aims of improving the nation's health and increasing the nation's wealth.
4. The Government is committed to delivering the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of the Cooksey Review. The Government announced in Budget 2007 an early Comprehensive Spending Review settlement for the Department of Trade and Industry's Science

Budget, which will see average annual real growth of 2.7 per cent over the period. The total budget for delivering the health research strategy will be announced at the end of the CSR.

5. As the Committee notes, Sir David's report goes wider than the new arrangements for the single health research fund and considers issues such as uptake of innovation in the NHS and drug development pathways. The Government welcomes this approach and are taking the recommendations forward. Some of these recommendations will require a longer period for implementation than the establishment of OSCHR, and a number of different stakeholders will be involved. Some of the recommendations may also require changes to European legislation.

6. We envisage that OSCHR will have a role in monitoring progress on the implementation of these wider recommendations.

June 2007

Appendix 2: Government Response of 18 July 2007

- 1. (Recommendation 1) The Committee recognises that the UK will benefit from a coherent strategy to maximise the health benefits from the UK's research and broadly endorses the approach taken by Sir David Cooksey in his wide-ranging review of UK's health research framework. (Paragraph 6)**

The Government agrees that the UK will benefit from a coherent health strategy and also endorses that the approach taken by Sir David Cooksey was the right one.

- 2. (Recommendation 2) We believe that Sir David was right to exceed his remit and we welcome the board-ranging nature of the review. However we feel that it would have been appropriate to advertise the changes in the terms of reference to attract a broader range of opinions. (Paragraph 8)**

The Government agrees with the Committee that it was appropriate for Sir David Cooksey to go beyond the scope of the original terms of reference in the light of the evidence he received. The Government does not feel that this required a formal change to the Terms of Reference for his review, given its already wide scope; Sir David consulted widely, receiving over 280 responses to the written consultation and met a large number of interested parties to discuss issues throughout the review.

- 3. (Recommendation 3) Whilst the pharmaceutical sector is clearly of great importance to the UK's health research output, the Committee is concerned that the allied health research sectors such as medical engineering and technology, preventative and public health research should not be overlooked. The DTI and DH must ensure that these sectors are represented within both OSCHR and the TMFB. (Paragraph 9)**

The Government agrees that these areas are important and should form part of the joint health strategy. John Bell and the OSCHR Interim Oversight Group are currently developing plans for the Translational Medicine Board, which will have a wide remit rather than focusing on pharmaceuticals alone. In addition they are also in the process of establishing a Public Health Research Board with a similarly broad remit to develop the strategy around public health.

- 4. (Recommendation 4) We look forward to the announcement in the Comprehensive Spending Review regarding the Single Fund Budget, and expect the current combine budget for the MRC and the NHS R&D function to be at least maintained. (Paragraph 10)**

The details of the Department for Health and MRC settlements will be known in the autumn.

- 5. (Recommendation 5) We acknowledge and support the importance of translational and clinical research. However, it is essential that the new proposals do not result in decreased funding for basic research. (Paragraph 11)**

The Cooksey Report clearly recognises the importance of basic research and the importance of maintaining the UK's excellence in this area, and Government supports this view. It is vital to get the balance right between basic, applied and translational research, and OSCHR will support transparent and evidence-based decision-making on that balance over time.

6. (Recommendation 6) We share the concerns submitted in evidence regarding the impact of the proposed institutional arrangements and the possible effect upon the MRC. We are firmly of the view that OSCHR should operate as a light touch organisation does not complicate the existing successful administrative mechanisms of the MRC. (Paragraph 13)

OSCHR will be a light-touch organisation. The aim is to build on the strengths of the current administration systems, whilst creating a simpler mechanism for those applying for funding.

7. (Recommendation 7) We support the setting of priorities, but we expect OSCHR to ensure that the best in all fields is funded and research outside the priorities is adequately supported. We expect performance monitoring to be done without the use of rigid targets. (Paragraph 14)

The Government agrees that research across the whole spectrum of health research should be funded, but there needs to be better alignment between health need and research. The joint strategy is an opportunity to do this by setting the strategic direction for research.

Monitoring of performance is an important way to ensure accountability for delivering strategies, and requires the setting of targets and objectives. The MRC, like the other Research Councils, is subject to a performance management system, based on a delivery plan, which sets out targets and milestones, though not in an excessively rigid way, and its progress against these is monitored. The performance management system for the joint health research strategy has not yet been developed but Government anticipates that this will include clear objectives, targets and milestones, but accepts the need to avoid the use of excessively rigid targets.

8. (Recommendation 8) In setting out its joint research plan for the MRC and the NIHR, OSCHR must ensure that research that would benefit the developing world is part of the overall strategy. We recommend that there be clear mechanisms, structures or representations to ensure that there is adequate advocacy of developing world health research priority needs within OSCHR. (Paragraph 15)

Government agrees that research which would benefit the developing world should be an important part of the UK health research strategy. The MRC currently has an extensive portfolio of research which will benefit the developing world. For example research supported by the MRC in partnership with DfID has established the safety of a new vaginal microbicide product, which is now being investigated in a major clinical trial (co-funded by MRC and DfID) to test acceptability and effectiveness to protect women from acquisition of HIV. As this work has already established that African populations find the use of this product highly acceptable, it is hoped that it will be able to make a major contribution to HIV control once shown to be effective.

We envisage that OSCHR will ensure that research of this kind, much of which involves strategic partnership with other funders nationally and internationally, will continue to form an important part of the UK health research strategy.

9. (Recommendation 9) We welcome the recognition that peer review should remain the primary tool for assessing the scientific rigour of research proposals have funded to the MRC and NIHR. (Paragraph 16)

The Government agrees with the Committee that peer review should remain at the heart of funding decisions.

10. (Recommendation 10) We support the principles behind the fast-tracking crucial research. However, remain somewhat sceptical about the ability of the current structures to respond to the demands this would make on them. This is one area in which we will monitor developments. (Paragraph 19)

The Department of Health is taking this recommendation forward over the longer term. The Government agrees that health research systems must be able to respond to the demands placed on them as the recommendations of the Cooksey Review are taken forward. We are streamlining the procedures underpinning research in order to support an efficient research environment that commands public confidence and protects research participants. For example, a revised model Clinical Trial Agreement has been launched to speed up the initiation of industry-sponsored trials and plans are being developed for central sign-off for multi centre trials.

11. (Recommendation 11) We welcome the initial stages in implementing the review's recommendations. The committee will take a close interest in reviewing progress and how the new institutional arrangements will work in practice. (Paragraph 20)

The Government welcomes the Committee's continued interest in this important area.

July 2007

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2006-07

First Report	Work of the Committee in 2005-06	HC 202
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Third Report	The Cooksey Review	HC 204
Fourth Report	Research Council Institutes	HC 68-I
Fifth Report	Government Proposals for the Regulation of Hybrid and Chimera Embryos	HC 272-I (Cm 7139)
Sixth Report	Office of Science and Innovation: Scrutiny Report 2005 and 2006	HC 203 (HC 635)
Seventh Report	2007: A Space Policy	HC 66-I
First Special Report	Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence Based Policy Making: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2005-06	HC 307

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First Report	Meeting UK Energy and Climate Needs: The Role of Carbon Capture and Storage	HC 578-I (HC 1036)
Second Report	Strategic Science Provision in English Universities: A Follow-up	HC 1011 (HC 1382)
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Sixth Report	Identity Card Technologies: Scientific Advice, Risk and	HC 1032
Seventh Report	Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence Based Policy Making	HC 900-I
First Special Report	Forensic Science on Trial: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2004-05	HC 427
Second Special Report	Strategic Science Provision in English Universities: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2004-05	HC 428

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